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WITHDRAWAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT DEPRECATED.

And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.—PSALM LI., 11.

THIS was the prayer of David, after Nathan's reproof had awakened him to a sense of his great sin. He had lost communion with God. The grieved Spirit had in a measure departed from him, and he feared might be wholly withdrawn. That, it seemed to him, would be a terrible calamity—more terrible than all his predicted temporal chastisements. "If it must be so," the spirit of his prayer is, "let the child that is born unto me die, my prayers, and tears, and fastings for him availing not. Let evil, dimly shadowed forth by the prophet, be raised up against me out of mine own house. As to all earthly blessings, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight; but take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

Is not the prayer of the text, my brethren, appropriate to our case? Have not our sins provoked the Holy One of Israel? Has not the Spirit been in a measure grieved away from us; and may we not fear the more entire cessation of his gracious influences? I propose, then, to show, as we dwell on the text, *WHY and how we should deprecate His withdrawal.*

I. *WHY should we deprecate the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit?* Generally, because he is the source of all spiritual life. Man, by nature, is "dead in trespasses and sins;" and even as renewed, we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." We are "born of the Spirit." By the Spirit we are "washed," "sanctified," "sealed," "led," "guided into all truth," "built up," "our infirmities are helped," we are "strengthened with might." We "live in the Spirit," we "walk in the Spirit," we "obey the truth through the Spirit," we "pray in the Holy Ghost." The Holy Spirit "dwelleth in us," "bears witness with our spirit," gives us "liberty," "sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God," is "the earnest of our inheritance." We are the "epistle of Christ, written with the Spirit,"

we are "changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "The fruit of the Spirit is in *all* goodness, and righteousness, and truth." As well imagine that this edifice would retain its form, proportions and strength, were the law of attraction to cease, or that by the sculptor's art life could be infused into the block of marble, as that without the Holy Spirit aught truly good would spring up in the human heart. As well think to preserve the inanimate corpse from ghastliness and decay and loathsomeness, as to keep him from whom God's Spirit has departed, from all spiritual wandering and darkness and wretchedness. But let us note, more particularly, some of the consequences of the withdrawal of the Spirit.

1. *Deadness in ordinances.* All ordinances are means of grace, but only means—of themselves they have no efficacy. Nay, without God's blessing they may even harden the heart. Transparencies, they were designed to be, through which God's glory shall shine into the soul. But without the Spirit's influence, they are transparencies no longer; they are opaque, shutting out the light. Follow one who has grieved away the Holy Spirit to his *closet*. He goes not promptly and joyfully, as to his best loved employment, into the presence of his dearest friend. He goes tardily, gloomily—driven by conscience. He has a sad sense of unfitness for closet duties; sin not thoroughly repented of weighs upon his spirit. He expects only—so has unbelief possessed him—to repeat once more the old round of formality; and he dreads to meet again, only to offend, his oft offended God and Savior. But pray he must, after some sort; to renounce the duty altogether were to renounce all hope, even the poor, barren, selfish hope of escaping hell. He opens the Bible—he reads almost mechanically; it is a sealed book. Not as once does light gleam from every line; not as once does it fasten his attention and melt his heart. His mind wanders, anticipating the day's business at morning, and reviewing it at night; or, at the latter season, sinking into drowsiness. The reading of God's Word ended—perhaps cut short, a few verses sufficing—prayer follows, if prayer it may be called. Words without feeling—the same old forms of expression—no freshness—no gushing out of the heart—no subduing sense of God's presence—no casting of the soul's burdens upon God—no disposition, as in better days, to linger at the throne of grace! Vagrant thoughts are mingled with almost every petition—thoughts going out, as they are wont, after the absent heart. The prayer, too, is cut short; and almost the only pleasant feeling connected with it, is the feeling at the close, that the duty is done, that the demand of the stern task-master, conscience, has been once more met. No shining of the face after such a service; it is care-worn and guilt-worn still! Nor is it long, commonly, before a duty so irksome is often intermitted; and at length it wholly ceases, save on occasions, as conscience may need an opiate.

Much the same lifelessness is manifest in *family devotion*. This,

too, is a weariness. Little care is taken to have all the members of the family present. If once the Scripture read suggested often a word of instruction, or reproof, or warning, it is not so now. Whatever words of prayer are used, even the children, by that quick instinct which every spirit has to understand its fellow spirit, perceive that the power of prayer is lacking. They are inattentive and restless. Perhaps impatience is felt and manifested by him who leads in worship; and the whole service, instead of sustaining parental authority, diffusing peace over the family circle, and drawing down spiritual blessings, may even, by a strange perversion, exert the opposite influence. It is no wonder if it be soon discontinued.

Like things may be said of the *church prayer-meeting*. It has little attraction for the wanderer. A sprinkle of rain, or the prospect of it—a little snow—a little heat, or a little cold—a slight indisposition—an invitation to an evening party—an attractive public lecture or concert—a slight pressure of business—or a little fatigue when business is over—these, and like causes, keep him often from the place of prayer. And when there, he has no word of exhortation to utter, he seems to have scarcely anything in particular to pray for, and so, to the weariness of his brethren, he prays for everything. He prays, too, in hackneyed phrase. There is no welling up of crystal waters from the deep fountains of the heart. His prayer is the most formal of all forms—an unwritten form.

Nor is it much otherwise in the *sanctuary*. He may be regular and punctual in his attendance, orderly and grave in his demeanor. He may, in a manner, be interested in the services. He may take note of the singing, if a man of musical taste—whether the tunes are well selected, how the parts are balanced, and how the voices sound on each, whether enunciation, time, and expression are good. He may be pleased with the manner or the substance of the preaching. But he seeks not, he finds not, God in the sanctuary. The world follows him there, and is but feebly if at all repulsed. His heart goes not up with the song of praise, or the prayer; it responds not to the Scripture read. The truth unfolded he takes not home to his own bosom; it becomes not the food of his own soul. If he applies it at all, it is not to himself but to his neighbor. He goes from the sanctuary, unquickened, unrefreshed, unawakened, unblest.

2. Another evil resulting from the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, and closely linked, both as cause and effect, with that just described, is *increased worldliness*. The heart must have some object. If in ordinances and in its predominant affections, it rests not upon the Creator, it will inevitably fly to the creature. When surcharged with Divine influence, its inclination is heavenward, as the magnetized needle points to the pole:—"They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit." But if the Spirit depart, it is left to the gravitating force of sin, and its tendency is

ever downward. There is ample reason, then, for the complaint "my soul cleaveth unto the dust." "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh." The spirit of worldliness becomes strangely subtle and irresistible. It steals in upon the heart through a thousand channels—even amidst home-scenes—in business the most lawful, and in recreations the most innocent. Nor will the soul which has turned from its only satisfying portion, be likely to stop short of at least doubtful, if not forbidden, sources of enjoyment. Hence that making haste to be rich—that extravagance in dress, and furniture, and architecture, and equipage—that resorting to amusements of a worldly character and tendency, so often seen among professing Christians; and from which cavillers take occasion to say, "what do ye more than others?"

3. Yet, I remark, thirdly, it is another evil of the state we are describing, that *the soul is without comfort*. True comfort, we mean, such as it pants after and must have, or be poor and wretched. The Holy Spirit is styled by Christ "*the Comforter*." We are sinners, and this is a valley of tears, and of death; we need comfort, therefore, such as we can neither find in ourselves nor in earth—comfort, just such as the Spirit gives. But let him be grieved away, and what joylessness ensues! The Christian's hope then declines; for it is the Spirit that witnesses to his adoption. He stands in doubt of himself—distressing doubt. He knows not whether to deem himself a child of God, or a child of the devil—on the way to glory, or to perdition. His view of the cross having grown dim, the burden of guilt is heavy upon him. His evil propensities gain strength, his easily besetting sins especially, and he is powerless to resist. The shield of faith gone, terrible, at times, are the fiery darts of the tempter. In his best hours there is an "aching void" within, a sad remembrance of joys departed. How comfortless he is in ordinances, we have already seen. And if he goes to the world for satisfaction, he finds it vanity; he cannot enjoy it as in the days of unregeneracy even, for God has taught him its emptiness. Its best, its most innocent pleasures leave a sting behind; they are to him unsanctified and idolatrous. From the cares and perplexities of business, he finds not, as once, the closet a refuge. In disappointment, in bereavement—when his dwelling is desolate, and earth grows all dark around him—no comforts of God delight his soul. Go into a prayer-meeting, in a time of general religious declension, and what confirmation of these views will you find. No sweet experiences of God's favor uttered, no breathing forth of delight in God's truth, little dwelling on the higher privileges of God's children; but the talk and the praying are all of coldness, of sin, of doubt, of desertion, of God's frown. It is not the song of the pilgrim in the land of Beulah you hear, but the sad complaint of him who has lost his roll in the arbor of sloth and self-indulgence, or the groans and outcries of the prisoner of Giant Despair.

4. Another result of the Spirit's absence, is *reluctance to labor*

in the cause of Christ. When "filled with the Spirit," the Christian has "a mind to work." The love of Christ constrains him; he has "continual sorrow and heaviness of heart," as he thinks of dying souls; and he cheerfully bears the cross, so that he may gain the crown. Labor, too, is easy. It is easy to speak for Christ, for it is out of the abundance of the heart. It is easy to make sacrifices, for he is bought with a price, and sacrifice with him is but another name for *privilege*. But let the Spirit depart, and all how changed! He has no heart to warn sinners, and so he multiplies excuses. He lacks time, or he lacks ability, or the convenient time is not yet. The fear of man possesses him; he is not bold as formerly, but a very coward in the presence of the Anaks of impenitency. He is full of unbelief and despondency; all he could say he fears would do little good. Sometimes he seeks to soothe his conscience by a great show of conservatism. He is afraid of rashness and fanaticism, of a blind and headlong zeal. For fear of leaning to man's inventions, he neglects God's plain commandments. Due precaution against an unintelligent and unprofitable excitement is certainly commendable. Yet it is worthy of note, that such precaution is often most abundant when there is the least possible excitement in the Church—when it is all like a stagnant lake, scarce a breath of the Spirit ruffling its surface. False zeal, indeed, is to be deprecated; still "it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." And God has said, "because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

With the cessation of other activity, comes the decline of benevolence, and from the same cause. When Christians are spiritual, "the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounds unto the riches of their liberality." But not so when the Spirit is withdrawn. An increased amount of their means is absorbed in expenditures resulting from increased worldliness—from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Covetousness gains ground, a desire of hoarding, and a reluctance to part with money. The *habit* of withholding is gradually formed; and so the treasury of the Lord becomes lean, fields of benevolent enterprise already entered, are but poorly cultivated, opening fields are neglected, and all the wheels of evangelism move heavily; while the riches of the Church "are corrupted," her "garments are moth-eaten," her gold and her silver "is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness" against her.

5. Another sad result of the withdrawal of the Spirit, is *dissension among brethren*. Brotherly love is one of the chief fruits of the Spirit, manifesting itself in all gentleness, meekness, disinterestedness, and forbearance. We are commanded to "keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace." Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," says the Apostle Paul, "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption; let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;

and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Not only may the evils here mentioned be the means of grieving the Spirit, but they are greater abundance the result. Unkind thoughts arise between individuals—surmises, jealousies, misapprehensions—all springing, at first, perhaps, out of trifles, but growing speedily into an open feud. Parties are formed in the Church. In regard even to the decline of religion, there may be, not godly sorrow, not self-inspection, and self-humiliation, but mutual crimination and re-crimination. Churches are riven, Pastors and their people separated. The ministers of Christ, instead of seeing eye to eye, become divided, and spend in party warfare the strength that should be given to the saving of souls. Jealousies and suspicions are set afloat and entertained, in regard to the great benevolent institutions of the day. Everywhere in the Church, you may see brother looking distrustfully at brother; and amidst secret alienations, and open strifes, that grand proof of Christianity, the essential oneness of the Church, seems almost extinct; and instead of the world's saying, as of old, "behold how these Christians love each other," their cry is, "behold how they bite and devour one another."

6. To all this we add, *the abounding of error and apostasy.* God's Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He revealed the Truth—he opens the eyes of his people to see it—he keeps their hearts and minds "in the truth." If he depart, what can be looked for, but the incoming of error? The heart is then prepared for error; and if not at once, yet sooner or later, it will steal in. It will come in specious shapes and guises, so as to deceive, if possible, the very elect. As some ingenious, but false speculation—some philanthropic theory, essentially infidel—some new casting of an old doctrine, under the fair pretence of progress in theology—some grand simplification, or some amazing profundity—something enlarged and liberal—some rubbing off of the rough corners of Calvinism—regeneration made plain—conversion made easy—religion modernized, telegraphed, put upon the rail-road, adapted to the spirit of the age. Encroachment at first will be comparatively trifling, it will be gradual and subtle, until the foundations are destroyed. Seek you facts in confirmation of these views. Look for a notable one to Germany. Whence came her cold, soul-destroying, neology? Let one of her own sons answer—"From dead orthodoxy."

Scandalous practices may not at first abound in the Church; the force of habit may prevent. The car may move awhile on the track after the motive power has ceased. But as surely as all restraint upon indwelling sin comes of the Holy Spirit, so surely, if the Spirit depart, will it break out at length into gross iniquity; and trying cases of discipline will be multiplied, until, perhaps, in the deadness of the Church, the hand of discipline shall be paralyzed.

7. Not the least of the evils which come of grieving away the Spirit, is *the ruin of souls.* The church is the "pillar and ground

of the truth ;" in some sense, the channel through which divine influence flows to the lost. If the Spirit leaves the Church, He leaves the world. "If the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me?" Even in the incipient withdrawal of the Spirit, such as we now witness, how unbroken are the ranks of the ungodly ! Let your eyes, my brethren, affect your hearts. Behold the impenitent in your families ;—there is scarce a house among us in which there is not at least one dead. See them in the congregation, and around you—both frequenters and neglecters of the sanctuary—hastening on by thousands and by tens of thousands, to the world of woe. Remember, as you look, that the main reason why these friends, and fellow-hearers, and fellow-citizens are unawakened and unblest is, that the Spirit has departed from the Church—that her individual members, that *you*, have grieved him away. Remember, that as without the Holy Spirit, they will never repent—and as He abides primarily in the Church, and is by the Church, if at all, to be invoked upon the unconverted—the question whether they are to be saved or lost, turns upon that other question, will the Church, will *you*, be brought to realize the evil of the Spirit's absence, and to pray and act accordingly ?

8. Finally, To make the picture we draw complete, yet another shade must be added—the *influence of the state of things described upon the younger members of the Church*. It is in some respects peculiar. Many of the older members have formed their Christian character in better times, when the general tone of spirituality was high. Some of them, perhaps, through the habit of close walking with God, early established, and strengthened by many years of holy living, may be kept, even amidst general declension, "as a watered garden, and as a spring whose waters fail not." There are commonly "a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." But what shall become of the lambs ? How are they to be trained ? What will be the almost inevitable influence of the general example upon them ? Their characters at the forming period—they accustomed to be led rather than to lead—looking up to their elders in the Christian life with respect and confidence and having still hearts prone to depart from the living God, what sort of Christians will they become, if even the present absence of the Spirit's influence shall continue ? What manner of persons will take our places, when these heads, some of them now whitening for the grave, shall be laid there ? To whom shall we bequeath the precious truths and institutions we now hold in trust ? What sort of warriors are we training to fight, when our warfare is over, the good fight of faith—to take part in the mighty conflict, already begun, for the world's salvation ? The absence of the Spirit from us, is not our loss alone, or the loss of the impenitent connected with us ; it is the loss of the church that shall live after us—of the perishing souls around her, and of the world at large, whose salvation shall be helped or hindered by her faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

Such, my brethren, are some of the reasons, why we should, like David, deprecate the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. It leads to deadness in ordinances—to increased worldliness—to destitution of comfort—to reluctance to labor and to give for Christ—to dissension among brethren—to error and apostacy—to the ruin of souls—and to the deterioration of character in the rising generation of Christians. All these evils, as we have already intimated, appear not in their fulness at once. But come they will—gradually, in a natural and sure course—if the absence of the Spirit continue. Can you not now perceive their incipient manifestations? Have I drawn a fancy sketch; or do your own eyes behold, in some measure, the sad original? And is there not enough in what we now see, and have reason to fear, to call forth from us the prayer, Take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us—unto the whole Church—the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us with thy free Spirit.

II. But we were to show, in the second place, *how we should deprecate the Spirit's absence*. We may ask and receive not, because we ask amiss. Action must correspond with prayer; it must be an echo of the prayer, or that will be unavailing. Yet I need not greatly enlarge on this head. If our need of the Spirit be truly and deeply felt, it can hardly fail to call forth the right kind of prayer. It may be briefly remarked, however:—

1. We should pray *with self-examination*. If the Spirit be absent from the church, he is absent from individuals. If absent, he has, as we have all along taken for granted, and as the Scriptures abundantly show, been grieved away. *Individuals* have grieved him. We should not, then, by a vague, general imputation, cast the guilt upon the Church, nor yet upon our individual brethren; but each ask for himself, how have I grieved the Spirit? What iniquities of mine have separated between me and my God? What is there in my heart, my speech, my aims, my habits, my domestic life, my business walks, my secular or holy things, inconsistent with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Diligently, faithfully, impartially, should we scrutinize ourselves, and pray as we do it, "Search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

2. We should utter the prayer of the text *with penitence*. Not only must we see, we must hate and renounce the sins which have grieved the Spirit. Else seeing will only deepen our guilt. No matter though our sins be as the right hand or the right eye, we must part with them. And we must renounce them, not merely because they have brought sorrow on our souls, and threaten greater, but because they *are* sins—exceeding sinful—sins against God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit—a Christian's sins—sins against light and love and solemn resolves, and a covenant sealed with blood—sins fitted to ruin other souls, and bring dishonor upon the Savior's name.

3. I add only, we should utter the prayer of the text *with hope*. "The Lord taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy." "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "Return unto me," he says, "and I will return unto you." "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." As to his readiness to give the Holy Spirit, there is a most explicit and wonderful declaration:—"If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." If straitened at all, it is in ourselves, not in Him. Let us pray then with hope. It is a good sign if he stir us up to pray. Will he not give us the blessing he prompts us to ask? Seeing our sins—not excusing, but bewailing and forsaking them—realizing the preciousness of the blessing we ask, and the evils of its absence—taking encouragement from God's character and promises, and coming only in the name of Christ—let us cry here, in our closets, in our families, in the prayer-meeting, in the frequent ejaculation of our hearts—let us cry perseveringly—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from us."

SERMON CCCCXL.

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THE PENITENT THIEF.

Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.—LUKE XXIII., 42.

THE scenes of Calvary should be in our daily and everlasting remembrance. For how can the branches flourish forgetful of the vine; or the stones of a temple rest unmindful of their foundation? And can a wandering and lost sinner go a day's journey without looking to the Cross where was hung the light and salvation of the world? Could we, however, for a moment forget our own personal interest in the dying of the Lord Jesus, there is in the event itself, and in the circumstances attending it, an interest unparalleled in the history of the earth.

In the early morning of that ever memorable day, the people were flocking and settling like a cloud on the head and sides of the mountain, to attend "this troubled feast of death." And as the MAN OF SORROWS came slowly bearing his Cross up the hill, unnot-

terable emotions must have been awakened in many a heart. For the doctors saw there the man who, twenty-one years before, had astonished them with his understanding and answers; and the traders in the temple saw there the man who had driven them out and overturned their tables; and the visitors from Gadara saw there the man by whom, as they thought, they had lost their herd in the sea. The lawyers and Priests, the Pharisees and Scribes saw in him the man who had exposed their hypocrisy, denominated them a generation of serpents, whited sepulchres, children of their father the devil, and candidates for the damnation of hell. Men also were there to see him faint, by whom they had been miraculously strengthened with food; the daughters of Jerusalem came to bewail him who needed their tears less than they were needed for themselves and their children; and children came to see nailed to the wood arms in which they had been taken and blessed. A group of spectators, once palsied and maimed, came to behold him mangled by whom they were restored to perfect soundness; and men once blind came to see his eyes closed in death from whom they had received the blessing of vision. Tell us, Martha and Mary, as ye stand there supported by that brother who had been dead four days; and thou widow of Nain, sustained by that son who sat up and began to speak when Jesus met the bier at the gate,—tell us, what are your emotions to see him who is the resurrection and the life, on his way to the tomb? And thou, blessed among women—but we ask not after a mother's anguish—this is that spoken of by the venerable Simeon when he said, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also."

Behold this august sufferer on the cross! The earth is quaking, the rocks are rending, dead saints are rising, and the black heavens do thunder like an angel speaking. "Ill wast thou shrouded then, O patient Son of God!" Are James and John drinking of the cup mingled for their Lord? Is Peter following him to prison and to death? No, he is treading the wine press alone, and of the people there is none with him—only on either side a thief. The rabble wag their heads and rail, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross." The scribes and priests mock, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." One malefactor reviles, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." The other entreats, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The Savior cries, "It is finished." The centurion confesses, "Truly, this was the Son of God." And the people, who had witnessed the amazing sight, smote on their breasts and returned.

Such was the crucifixion on Calvary; not to be forgotten by those who witnessed it—nor must it be forgotten by us who read and hear it. And while every part is full of interest and worthy of contemplation, the time will allow us at present only to look at the Savior and the man whom he saved—the thief who was that day "caught up into Paradise."

1. LORD, remember me. Whom does he call *Lord*? The babe of Bethlehem and of the manger; the child hunted by Herod; the son of the carpenter; the wandering, homeless Galilean; the object of envy and of hate; the despised Nazarene. It was a man betrayed and denied by his own family; forsaken by his friends in his last trial, and forsaken of his God in his last conflict. He was one nailed to the wood as the most vile, and worthless, and execrable object in all Judea. Will you, crucified thief, make account of such an one? Can he help thee? Is not praying to him adding to thy sins? Dost thou call him Lord? Yes, it is well; it is no mistake; it is the Lord of heaven and earth; the Maker, Preserver, Redeemer, and Judge of mankind; before whom we must shortly stand to receive our eternal reward. Are we prepared to meet him?

2. LORD REMEMBER ME. How *remember*? Not his follies, not his crimes, but his wants on the verge of the grave and eternity. He wished to be remembered with the favor which God bears to his people. What is it to remember with favor? Ask that mother who watches with a sick child till exhausted she sinks to sleep, and immediately wakes again to see if all is still, and the remedies properly administered, and then sleeps again only to dream of her darling's recovery or death. She can tell you what it is to remember. And that other woman, who lies waking during the stormy night, and praying to God who rules the ocean, that he would preserve her sailor boy, who may be tossing in the perils of the deep. She can tell what it is to remember with favor, for her affection and her fears render her breast as tumultuous as the sea. And many a widow can tell you, whose tears in summer refresh the sod on *his* grave, and gems the marble slab in the frosts of winter. Such is the remembrance for which the thief prayed, the kind and constant regard of his heart, whose favor is life and whose loving kindness is better than life. But will the eternal God thus remember mortals? Hear. Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Zion's God replied, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

3. LORD, remember ME. Who is this *me*, that he should ask a place in the memory of Immanuel? The Bible gives no account of his life, only that he was an evil doer, and died a penitent. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." He was essentially like us, "sold under sin." He had, it may be presumed, fewer religious advantages and wholesome restraints. Perhaps he had not a praying mother to teach him the fear of the Lord, as we had, or may have yet; no pious father's example and counsel as we had, or may have yet. His character warrants the presumption that he did not reverence the Sabbath, nor read the

Scriptures, nor attend divine worship ; that he had no closet for prayer, and no Sabbath school nor Bible class instruction. It is not improbable that his parents were irreligious in their feelings, conduct, and conversation ; and that the statutes, the Sabbath, the worship, ordinances, and people of God were disesteemed by them, and hence by their son. Temptations to sin were, it is likely, multiplied about his path, so that he sat in the seat of the scorner, and went with her whose steps take hold on hell. It is not strange that he was ruined. For, parents, the children committed to your care may be as well tempered as any since the Fall ; and you may have them baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity ; you may store their minds with sacred texts and divine hymns ; you may take them to your closet, and cause them to kneel by your side, and lay your hand on their head while you pray ; you may warn and entreat and persuade, ten thousand times, with a heart full, even to tears ; you may place them in the care of devoted teachers ; and having done this, send them from you to some other village or country, with a Bible in their trunk and a letter of advice in their pocket, and accompany them with your supplications, and send after them serious and heavenly messages by almost every mail ; and after all, you must either be ignorant of the world they are in, or grow indifferent to their welfare, or feel an unwonted confidence in the oversight which a covenant-keeping God will take of them, else you will lie awake till midnight through apprehension that your son will become a Barabbas, and your daughter a Mary Magdalene ! Still, after all this fidelity on your part—the Lord grant it may not be less than has been supposed—there is ground of hope that your sons will be as olive plants, and your daughters as polished stones, but this hope is not founded on their goodness nor on yours, but on the covenant of a faithful God showing mercy to thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments. It is no wonder that the thief was ruined ; presuming, as we may, that he was a neglected, spoiled child. And that he was so, is easy to be believed from our acquaintance with men like him. For, some time since, it was my lot to spend a portion of the Sabbath for three years in the instruction of prisoners ; and they were, as far as could be ascertained, generally men whose religious education was much if not entirely neglected in their youth.

Let us now return from this digression to the dying malefactor. He had broken the law, had received a most ignominious sentence and was suffering its execution. How many times he had transgressed, we know not ; how much he had suffered from the stings of a guilty conscience, we know not ; how many hearts of friends his conduct had riven, how many hopes blasted is not in the record ; but one thing, worth more to him than the universe, we do find there, namely “ Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

WHEN THOU COMEST INTO THY KINGDOM ! He set a time.

We should expect to hear him say as his companion did, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us; thou art in the same condemnation; remember us, therefore, while hanging here; ease our pains; let us go down from these crosses. But of this he says nothing. He has a larger request; so large, one would think he had met with that text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Else how could he imagine that the Son of God would be mindful of him just at the moment of completing the great work of redemption on which the eyes of Heaven and hell had been so intently fixed, and returning home to his Father's house and bosom, escorted by the twenty thousand chariots of God and twelve legions of angels, and overwhelmed with hallelujahs and hosannas, as the everlasting gates lifted up their heads that the King of glory might come in. How, amidst this throng, this joy, and the unnumbered recollections which came like a flood into the Redeemer's soul, could he, a poor, wretched, despicable and guilty thief think to be, and pray to be remembered at such a moment, by such a personage—a personage in whose sight whole nations are dust? It would seem to be unparalleled presumption, and yet it was not presuming too far—for his stained soul was washed white in the blood then falling from Immanuel's veins, the angels sung Heaven's anthem for a penitent sinner; and that same sinner went that same afternoon to the realms of the blessed whither Jesus himself had just gone; and there he was welcome, and there he has been welcome for more than eighteen hundred years, a king and a priest unto God, not for an instant forgotten by his Savior amidst the multiplied cares of a universe whose government rests on his shoulders! Oh! the compassion of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Let us now for one moment glance at the ground we have gone over. In the first place, we found the transactions of Calvary interesting beyond all parallel. In the second, we found the penitent thief was not guilty of idolatry in praying to his fellow sufferer, the Lamb who was slain, because he was that wonderful being, "God manifest in the flesh." In the third place, we found that the remembrance for which the dying malefactor petitioned, though a great favor, was not too much to be expected from Him who came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. In the fourth place, we supposed this criminal's moral and religious education to have been defective, both because such is the fact with that class of persons in our day, and because, too, God is pleased to crown the fidelity of parents with his blessing. In the last place, we spoke of the return of Christ's spirit to Heaven, and of the thief's departure a short time after; and there they have been, and there they are now, and there they ever shall be, world without end. Who of us would not be there also? That we may be prepared at length to join them, allow me to remark,

1. We cannot be saved without a knowledge of Christ crucified. The thief's soul had been lost if he had not met with the Savior at

the place of execution, or had not in some way been led to an acquaintance with him who was "lifted up." The immortals in this land, who know little or nothing of Jesus, are in extreme danger of perishing; and the millions of heathen are in a darkness that may be felt. "Arise, O Sun of Righteousness, arise."

2. We must have faith in Christ's ability and willingness to save, and feel our need of his almighty help. The multitudes on Calvary had opportunity to be acquainted with Christ's character and their own, but they did not believe, and were not saved. The thief believed and was saved. We have often heard of Jesus. Do we believe in Him? If not, we are on the verge of perdition; for he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.

3. Jesus saves the humble and penitent, however great may be their guilt. He came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance; he came to seek and save the lost. His blood is a fountain which cleanses from all sin.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away;"

for "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

"Dear dying Lamb! thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

4. The thief is the only instance in the Bible of conversion at the hour of death, that none should despair, and that none should presume.

5. God is a sovereign. One thief was taken, the other left. And what if he save some of you and leave others to perish? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

6. The last remark is, men err in their efforts to be remembered or immortalized. So universal and strong is the desire of being remembered, that God employs it as a motive to a righteous life, when he says, "The just shall be in everlasting remembrance." For it pains us to believe that in a few years the wave of oblivion will roll over our memory and leave not a wreck behind. Hence youth circulate their place-books to give and receive memorials of each other. May I ask my young friends, are your names in the book of God's remembrance, and do you wish them written there? We write our names in the Family Bible that they may be handed down to the millennial day; but turn first to the twenty-third chapter of Luke, the forty-second verse. Have we adopted and offered as our own that prayer, "Lord remember me?" Are our names enrolled in the Family Register of Heaven; and do we

wish them written there? And you, who obtain the portrait or miniature of your friend, that it may be hung in your hall or worn at your heart, tell me, do you carry the image and likeness of God in your heart, and is your name engraven on the palms of his hands? And to those who are ambitious of numerous acquaintances and friends, that their memory may fill a large place, let me say, One friend is enough if that friend be God; and for the truth of this I appeal to the glorified thief, was not that one Friend of yours enough for you? Hearer, have you such a friend? And have you not seen mortals lying on a bed from which they never arose, give to the dear ones weeping around them some keepsake, with the injunction "Remember me?" But do you recollect whether they committed their soul to Christ with the prayer, "Lord, remember me." One writes a book, or plants a tree, or erects a pillar, or builds a city, for a memorial, but praying for no remembrance in Heaven, his name is neither in the book of life, nor on the tree of life, nor on any pillar or wall in the city of life. My friends, are yours there? Those who would be remembered for ever must be good. Let them espouse the cause of the poor, the neglected, the oppressed and the dying. Jesus secured for himself an eternal weight of glory in giving his labors and his blood for the salvation of the lost; and the disciples who in this resemble their Master shall be with him to behold and reflect his glory through infinity and to all eternity.

Have we, permit me to ask again, offered the prayer of the thief? We are sinners as well as he; do we pray as well? Have we been sensible of our guilt and danger? Has the plague of our hearts been seen and lamented; have the terrors of the Lord taken hold of us, and the arrows of the Almighty drunk up our spirits? In our distress have we prayed to him and found pardon and peace? Those who are prayerless now while on earth, may desire hereafter that God would forget them. He does not, however, forget even his enemies; his eye is, and will be, on them, his voice will terrify them, and his hand fill the cup of their woe to overflowing, as they are dashed on the rocks of dark damnation. God remembers those who forget him.

Let it be our daily prayer that the Lord would remember us in mercy and in our every need. When we walk in darkness and see no light; when temptations from without assail us like a tempest, and our corruptions within rage like a storm; when we tread on thorns and the old serpent wraps his folds around us, Lord, remember us, then, for thou wast thyself tempted and art able to succor. When our friends betray and forsake us, and those most dear are dying and dead; when we are homeless strangers in a strange land; when our garments wax old, and the last of our oil and meal are mingled, and the sticks gathered to bake it, that we may eat it and die; Lord, remember us, then, for thou wast thyself the homeless, destitute, and forsaken Man of Sorrows. And when we reach the end of life's journey, when death meets us on

his pale horse, and presses his cold hand on our hearts till they can beat no longer, and our bodies return to the clay, and our spirits to God who gave them, O Lord, remember us in that trying hour, for thou wast thyself "cut off out of the land of the living." And when that morn rises in which the sleep of the dead is broken by the archangel's trumpet, and the funeral knell of this world is tolling on the shores of eternity; when we stand before the great white throne subjected, for every action, word and thought, to the searching eye of the omniscient and holy God, and the assembled nations tremble to hear the dread decision which consigns them each to Heaven or Hell; then, O Lord, remember thy unworthy servants with the favor which said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."



SERMON CCCCXLI.

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OBEDIENCE.

Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—
EPH. VI., 1—4.

RIGHT and obligation correspond to each other. If children are under obligation to obey, it is the right as well as the duty of parents to command. The text enjoins the duty of obedience. Parents are directed to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The admonition of the Lord, is such instruction and reproof as is agreeable to the divine will. The nurture of the Lord is that discipline or government which the Lord requires.

Before giving reasons why parents should exact, and children render, obedience, I will notice three preliminary questions:

1. On whom is this duty of requiring obedience binding?

The text makes it binding on parents; and if on them, by implication, it is binding on teachers, masters, guardians, and all such as for the time being occupy the place of parents. If the duty of obedience is binding on children, it is binding on scholars, appren-

tices, wards, and all such as are in the place of children. Hence the direction of the text is to all who should command or obey.

2. When and how far is the duty of the text binding?

Have parents a right to command *everything*, and must children *always* obey? The text contains the only necessary qualification to its commands. It directs children to obey their parents *in the Lord*, and parents to bring up their children in the discipline *of the Lord*. The qualifications *in the Lord* and *of the Lord*, show that such commands must be given and obeyed as the Lord approves. Should a parent be wicked enough to order a child to steal, kill, or use profane language, it would be against a higher command, and therefore null and void. The parent has no right to give, and the child no right to obey, such a command. With the exception of orders directly contrary to those of God, it is not left to the discretion of children when and how far they shall obey. The Apostle in Colossians says: Children obey your parents in all things—small things and great things, agreeable things and disagreeable things. God has committed it to the understanding of parents and not that of children to select what they shall do. The parent is made responsible for the conduct of his children in such a sense, that he sins if he does not exact obedience in what they ought to do. It is an ordinance of God that the taste and judgment of children should yield to the decision of parents as to what is best for them to do or not to do.

3. How long must the term of obedience continue?

The civil law says twenty-one years. This is founded on the belief that at this age the mind is sufficiently matured, and the principles of common sense sufficiently developed for self-government. When the youth between twelve and twenty, at any time wishes to break from restraint, feeling fully competent for self-government, parental control is much more needed than in earlier childhood. Now, of all other times, perfect obedience should be required. When he knows enough to distrust his own capacity, he is becoming capable of self-government. Parents should govern till children no longer need control, and children should obey till they have no longer a disposition to disobey, and then they may be safely trusted to govern themselves.

I. One reason for obedience is the command of God.

Infinite Wisdom has made children more helpless than the young of other creatures. This makes parental authority necessary and easy, and affords time for parents to carry out the plans, and children to learn the habits of obedience. The fifth command directs, Honor thy father and thy mother. The text says, Children, obey your parents in the Lord. And the Apostle to the Colossians, says, Children obey your parents in all things. Had God spoken so plain a precept but once, it would seem sufficient. But to confirm the matter beyond all doubt, it is repeated at least three times. If any one asks, Why must I obey my parents? The

answer is, Because God says you must. If any ask, Why must I govern my children? The answer is, Because God requires you to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord. These Scriptures completely establish the duty of obedience; and here I might end the discourse, if men would be governed by, Thus saith the Lord.

II. Another reason for obedience is justice.

The text affirms that obedience is *right*, in the original, *dikaion*, just. Parents have done enough for their children to make their obedience at least required by justice. What child will ever be able to repay the care, toil and affection of his parents? Can he do less than to obey? The child who is disposed to disobey, should ask himself, where did I get my breakfast this morning? Who gave me my clothing, and a thousand other blessings? Who prayed for me, rocked me in infancy, watched over me in sickness, and hung over me with a solicitude which could not be hired? The disobedient are dishonest, taking from parents what justly belongs to them. It is base ingratitude to disobey those who have given us reputation, education, and under God made us all that we are.

III. Obedience is praiseworthy.

The Hottentot proves his majority by being able to whip his mother. Like him I have seen children who thought it "smart" to disobey their mother. They were too stupid to know that disobedience arises from ignorance and a want of good sense. Parents suffer, in our estimation, when we find they cannot govern their children! And their children suffer still more. On the other hand, what is more praiseworthy in both parents and children than prompt obedience? A poet has immortalised the lad who, even when the ship was on fire would not leave his post without liberty from his father.

IV. The wisdom of age and ages approve of obedience.

Aged persons, who were once guilty of disobedience now look upon it with regret, and review no part of their life with more pain. The wise regard it as a great blessing that they were made to obey. The ancients required respect to age. Young Greeks rose on the approach of the aged. The Levitical law required the young to rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man. Respect and obedience go together. Cato, the wisest of his nation, wished Roman youth to turn red, but never pale. He would have them redden before those whom they should obey, but never be afraid to do what they were commanded. The spirit of this maxim pervading the community made Rome what it was. Abraham was the wisest of the patriarchs. God gave this as a reason why his family should be distinguished and why he should be told of the destruction of Sodom. For I know him, that he will *command* his children and his household after him.

His family government not only made his posterity celebrated, but made him the friend of God. Contrast the wisdom of Abraham with the folly of Eli, who instead of exacting obedience of his children merely reproved them, saying, why *do ye* such things? God said I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. Infinite Wisdom made a great distinction between Abraham and Eli, and their families, because of the difference in family government.

Solomon was the wisest man that ever was or ever will be. God said, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like unto thee, before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. This wisest of men says, My son, keep thy father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thy heart and tie them about thy neck. He would have them be as careful to obey as they were to bind a likeness, or charm to their hearts and their necks. The Rechabites afford a beautiful illustration of obedience. The prophet, says, I set before them pots full of wine and cups, and said, drink ye wine. But they said, we will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ye shall drink no wine. Not for temperance principles, but for obedience to their father, the prophet pronounces this blessing on the family. Thus saith the Lord; because ye have obeyed the commandments of Jonadab, your father, therefore Jonadab the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me, for ever.

Jesus of Nazareth left a more beautiful example than any of these. But one incident of his life is related from his infancy till he began to be about thirty years of age, and inspiration spared that for an example of filial obedience. Having never sinned, he was able at twelve to astonish the learned doctors at his understanding and answers. He returned to Nazareth with his parents and was subject unto them. Children, twelve or fifteen years of age, often think that they know too much to obey their parents, especially their mother. Yet Jesus knowing more than the doctors of the law, was subject unto his parents, setting an example to be followed in all ages.

V. The advantages of obedience.

Children often think their obedience is mostly advantageous to their parents. It is indeed valuable to them, but ten times more so to their children.

1. One advantage of obedience is that it teaches men to govern. He who will well reign, must first well serve. Parents wish their children, at a future day, to have capacity to govern a State, a school, or at least a family. All are born to reign in a republic. He who has never been governed himself, lacks capacity to govern others. The philosophy of this is, that the first step towards making a good governor is to govern self. He whose will has

never been broken and made obedient, cannot control his passions and is destitute of that order and balance of mind which is necessary to govern others. He who has discharged the duties of every inferior station, knows what should be expected of them, and by what means every man can be controlled. The secret of success in war and many other things, is good discipline, which is a patent that men must have stolen from Heaven and applied to their own purposes. It was this which made Rome and other powers each in her turn the mistress of the world. China, in spite of her dread of improvements, has long stood a powerful empire. One secret of her stability is that her higher offices must be filled by men who have served in sixteen subordinate grades. It has for a thousand years been almost a miracle to mankind that Romish priests who have been held together by such an assemblage of absurdities, are so successful in governing mind. Look into the institutions where these men are trained, and every step is absolute obedience from childhood till they are prepared to govern. While Rome pagan and Rome papal have been the most awful scourges of mankind, they show us how obedience teaches to govern. Bonaparte knew too much to trust a man in a responsible station, before he had first learned obedience in subordinate stations. The sun never sets on the empire of Queen Victoria. This has resulted from the wisdom of Parliament. When a man gets into the house of Lords, he wishes his son to come there with a capacity to govern the world. Hence tutors are employed to exact the lessons and obedience preparatory to such responsibilities. The literary institutions of Granville, Ohio, never had a better governor than Mr. Martin, who was for five years principal of the male Academy. When he came to die, the paroxysms of disease were so violent that he had his senses only at intervals. The last time his reason returned, he asked to see his two little children. His wife bringing them inquired, "Have you any directions to give concerning the children?" He replied; "Whatever else you teach them, teach them *submission*—submission to God and submission to yourself." He spoke not again, and no dying man ever expressed more in his last words.

A distinguished foreigner landing at one of our ports, heard that the mother of Washington was at a hotel. Gaining access to her, he ventured to ask her a question which he thought would take as long to answer as would be suitable for him to remain in the presence of such a personage. The question was, how did you train your son to make him such a man? She made the answer as short as the question. "I taught him the lesson of obedience." This should be taught all who would command like Washington.

2. Obedience makes useful men.

Abraham was efficient in forming the character of the Israelites by commanding his children and his household after him. The men whom God selected from all the world to receive the first dispensation, had well learned obedience under Egyptian task-

masters. When Christ was born, the temple of Janus was shut because the world being reduced to obedience to Rome, was at peace. Without comparing Roman or Egyptian servitude with Christian family government, we have the facts, that previous to the giving of the law and the spread of the Gospel, the recipients of these favors had learned obedience. Some have thought that the strict government of children breaks the spirit, prevents future independence and courage. This is answered in the history of the Spartans, the heroes of '76, Martin Luther, and all who have been trained under wholesome discipline. Let us see, in a few examples, how God trains men for stations of usefulness. Jacob was to be a useful man, the father of twelve sons, who were to stand at the head of the twelve tribes of Israel. He grew up indulged by his mother and with so little respect for his father that he imposed on him in obtaining the blessing. God saw that this was not the way to make the man required, and by his providence he was sent away three hundred miles, to serve twenty years under a severe master who changed his wages ten times. He returned a sterling man; able to pacify Esau, wrestle with an angel, and do anything required of a venerable patriarch. God designed to make Joseph the Lord of Egypt, who should contribute much to the Divine glory. Though pious at the age of seventeen, he was in peril of injury by an indulgence arising from his being loved more than all his brethren. To save him from this, he was sold into Egypt, and to become the best man there to inculcate obedience. As soon as the virtues of Joseph procured him favor, he was thrown into prison and returned to a condition of rigid obedience. Having thirteen years learned obedience, he was prepared for the station assigned. At a later period, God looked forward eighty years, when a man of consummate wisdom would be wanted to lead out a nation of bondmen, and prepare them for Canaan. He doubtless had the prayers and instructions of his parents, grew up in the house of Pharaoh, and was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Knowing that he should lead out Israel, he felt competent to the task, proceeded to kill the Egyptian who did the wrong. But God saw that he *lacked one thing yet*. To obtain this, he was sent into Midian to be a servant forty years. Though he fell in his own estimation, God now saw that he was armed at all points.

The tender parent, whose pitying eye spares wholesome discipline, should recollect that He, who, as a father, pitieth his children, and keeps them as the apple of his eye, rather than have them lose such a boon, will expose them to the cruelties of Padan Aram, Egypt and Midian. Even the man Christ Jesus, though without sin, while preparing for the work of redemption, was obedient to the law, being *subject unto* his parents. Luther says, "my parents treated me cruelly; one day, for a mere trifle, my mother whipped me till the blood came." His biographer says, "At school, the poor child was treated with equal severity. His mas-

ter flogged him fifteen times in one day." Without countenancing these things, we have the fact that he was inured to rigid obedience, and instead of destroying his courage, he became one of the most dauntless men of his age, and not only went to Worms in spite of as many devils as there were tiles on the houses, but, like a lion, he broke off one half the power of Rome. Obedience had much to do in forming the character of the Pilgrims.

3. Obedience to parents lays the foundation of obedience to all lawful authority.

There is a sense in which all are equally obedient. All obey something; either reason, interest, conscience, or some other lawful authority; or else they obey passion, vice, the mob, or some other unlawful authority. The kind of authority men are early accustomed to obey settles their future destiny. Obedience is so much a matter of habit, that family government is the foundation of all government. It will, in other places, be what it has been at home. Men may be expected to treat others as they do their parents; whether it be uncourteous, unkind, or the contrary.

He who will not obey his parents, may never be expected to obey any law which he ought to obey, either within, or without himself. Excessive indulgence has been pleaded on the ground that it will bring a return of indulgence in old age.

Parents! Govern your children now, and you will give them the elements of patience, respect and kindness, when you are old. But let them now govern you, and they always will, and when you are old, with a rod of iron. The aged never fall into such unfeeling hands as those who have grown up without respect to parental authority. The disturbers of the school were never governed at home. Thousands never bent their wills in the nursery, and they know not how to do it in the Church. They must there be flattered and "petted," or they will break their covenant with God and go to some wild "ism" of the day. Formerly, when offended, they ran behind the door; now the same temper carries them into another ecclesiastical connection.

If all children were brought up in the discipline of the Lord, laws would scarcely need a penalty. The virtue of obedience always ranked high among intelligent heathen. Fighting beyond and contrary to orders, seven hundred of Cæsar's men were killed. Assembling the survivors, he told them that "modesty and obedience are better than magnanimity of soul." When family government is entirely prostrate, bayonets, and not laws, must keep order. Criminals are increasing from ungoverned families. The parents of young Crowningshield, who murdered a venerable citizen of Salem, ordered his teacher never to correct him. A man acquainted with Spencer, who was hung on board the Somers, says, "he was always disobedient to his parents." The biographer of Arnold says, "he was headstrong, disobedient, and often painfully wounded a mother's heart." The fifth command makes honoring parents the condition of continuing long in the land, or long a prosperous

nation. To save the Jewish commonwealth, the disobedient were to be killed off by this law. If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, nor the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastised him will not hearken unto them. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of the city. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

The greatest advantage of obedience to parents is its power to produce obedience to God. He, who, from the settled habits of childhood, obeys his parents, feels very guilty and greatly distressed if he once disobeys. This well established habit imperceptibly passes to his teacher and all lawful authority, and he feels equally pained when he disobeys. At length, he finds that he has been all his life disobeying his heavenly Parent.

The inquiry meeting is the place to see the unspeakable advantages of obedience. Two are sitting in tears—one having always obeyed his parents, has a deep sense of sin, wonders that such a rebel is out of hell, and begins to feel that there can be no mercy for one who has so wickedly disobeyed God. He soon finds mercy, and is a substantial, devoted Christian. The tears of the other are flowing, because he does not wish to be lost, and he wants the blessings of religion. He confesses himself a sinner in general terms, but cannot realize that he is very wicked. He always disobeyed his parents, and cannot understand how there can be so much harm in disobeying God. There is no fulcrum in his heart on which to fix a sense of sin, and his seriousness disappears like the morning cloud and early dew.

Were I to promote universalism, I would labor first for the annihilation of family government. This would take away all just apprehensions of the sin of disobedience to God. No man would feel that he deserved hell, and then it would be easy to prove that there will be no such punishment. Genuine conversion follows conviction of sin, and the first right affection is an act of obedience. Growing in grace is rendering more ready obedience. In Heaven there is perfect obedience, and the final result of obedience paid to earthly parents. Few have rendered ready obedience under the parental roof, who have not sooner or later become Christians. On the other hand, few who do not obey earthly parents, will ever obey the great Parent above. Parents! Your children will obey God much as they do you. If you suffer them to slight your commands, you may look in vain for their conversion. If you would have them ever to obey God, make it forthwith a matter of prime importance to secure their perfect obedience to yourselves.

4. Favoring providences await the obedient.

By habituating themselves to obey lawful authority, children not only obey conscience, reason and interest, instead of passion and sin; but God watches over them for good. Rich blessings followed the children of Abraham, Jonadab, and the Pilgrims. But

another doom awaited Spencer, Crowningshield, Arnold, and the sons of Eli. While disobedient children throw themselves without the promise of divine protection, and are exposed to all sorts of evil, God will never forget the child who denies his own inclinations to obey his parents.

Thirty years ago, I knew a lad whose passion was strong for the sea, but he gave it up at the age of fifteen, to obey his widowed mother. A favoring providence never lost sight of that lad till his eloquence filled the galleries of the Senate Chamber at Washington. "Columbus was willing to leave the University and work at wool-carding, because his father required it." God guided the steps of that youth till he conducted him to the new world. "When Washington was fourteen years of age, he applied for, and received the appointment of midshipman in the British navy. His baggage was all on board a man-of-war, riding in the Potomac, just below Mount Vernon, when the entreaties of his mother induced him to sacrifice his long cherished desire to the duties of a son." Had he gone to sea, he might have become commander of a vessel, but it is not likely that we should ever have heard of him. God watched over that young man for good, till he stood at the head of our army and our country. The honors bestowed on these men are only straws in comparison with the boon awaiting the poorest children who obey their parents in the Lord.

I will conclude with some directions which should be seasonably, vigilantly, and uniformly carried out by those who ought to exact, or render, obedience.

1. Guard against the first act of disobedience.
2. Obey from Christian principle.
3. Obey with once speaking.
4. Obey immediately.
5. Obey when out of sight of superiors.
6. Obey in the presence of the disobedient.
7. Obey till perfect obedience becomes a settled habit of the heart, and then will you reap the eternal rewards of obedience in Heaven.